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Snap Shots of Lincoln

1. THE PIONEER AND WOODSMAN—A Boy's View.

To a boy whose idea of happiness goes beyond a hammock, a novel and a box of chocolates—to a boy who loves something hard with a spice of adventure in it—especially to one who knows the delight of a stiff hike through the hills and a camp in the woods, there is something fascinating about Lincoln's early days. I love to think of him as fighting the perils of the wilderness still full of bears, wolves, panthers and rattlesnakes, when every foot of land cultivated had to be won from the forest.

When the boy was only eight years old he had learned to swing an axe. From that time until he became of age "he literally chopped and hewed his way upward." You will remember, for instance, the removal of the Lincoln family from Spencer County, Indiana, to Decatur, Ill., where they planted a new home. The distance was nearly two hundred miles. Abe walked all the way through mud and water, driving two yokes of oxen. It took fifteen days for the journey, the family camping out at night. When reaching their destination the father and son immediately went to work on the log cabin which was to be their dwelling. When this was finished young Lincoln proceeded to cut and split rails enough to fence in their entire ten-acre farm.

Such things were no hardship to him. He was at that time twenty-one years old. "He stood six feet three and a half inches, barefooted; he was in perfect health; could out-run, outjump, outwrestle, and, if necessary, outfight any one of his age in that part of the country, and his grip was like the grip of Hercules." This early pioneer experience fitted Lincoln for his future life in three different ways:

First:—It gave him that inexhaustible physical strength which enabled him to bear the fearful load that in later years the nation laid upon his shoulders.

Second:—It made him robust in spirit and able to meet, without flinching, the enormous difficulties and the deadly perils that beset his path.

Third:—It gave him a sympathetic understanding of common men—those who toil with their hands in field and forest, in mine and mill, and thus fitted him to become the trusted leader of the nation.

2. LINCOLN, A LOVER OF BOOKS—A Girl's View.

How wonderful it is that a boy, whose school days altogether amounted to less than a year, should have become so fine a speaker, so noble a writer that his words have been given a permanent place with the great literature of the world.

He had a passion for books. He learned to read from the spelling book and the Bible. Later he got hold of *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Aesop's Fables*, *Weem's Life of Washington*, and *Shakespeare*. These he read through and through until he knew them by heart. He borrowed and read every book that he heard of within a radius of fifty miles.

Lying beside the fireplace, he would read until midnight by the blaze of the logs, and would rise early in the morning for more reading before the day's work began. He used to take a book into the corn fields with him, leave it at the end of a row, dip into it when he reached that point in his hoeing, read a paragraph or two and think it over until he came to the end of the next row.

Lincoln remembered what he read, not the idea only but the language of the writer. And he made it a habit whenever a sentence was muddy, obscure or difficult, to ponder over it until he had grasped its meaning and then to work away at it until he succeeded in putting the same idea into a clear, simple and intelligible statement. It was no doubt to this practice, which he resolutely continued year after year, that he owed his own crystalline literary style which, for beauty and power, is unsurpassed by the foremost masters of the English tongue.

5. LINCOLN, THE MAN OF GOD—A Christian's View.

I love to think of Abraham Lincoln as an Outspoken Christian. This was not true of him in the earlier part of his life. Perhaps the churches about him, being of a narrow and sectarian type, repelled rather than attracted him. But later, amid the heavy responsibilities of his position he became one of the most religious of men. He repeatedly and openly confessed his belief in God, his love for Christ and his need of divine support. He asked the people to pray for him. In the hour of sharp distress he turned for help to the Almighty and was not ashamed to say so.

He had the character of a Christian; was patient, long suffering, not easily provoked. When someone came to him in a great heat exclaiming, "Do you know Secretary Stanton says that you are a fool?" He replied, "Did Secretary Stanton say that? Well, Stanton is usually right, if he says I am a fool, I must be one."

It was actually true of him that he loved his enemies and blessed them that cursed him. What could be more profoundly and nobly Christian than his second inaugural, especially the memorable words with which it closed?

"With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are now in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who has borne the battle and for his widow and orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

6. LINCOLN, THE LEADER—A Follower's View.

Great as he was Abraham Lincoln could have accomplished little by himself alone. The wonderful achievements connected with his name were actually carried through by a multitude of men and women who worked with him and under his direction: his cabinet, the legislators supported his policies, the officers and men who fought on land and sea and especially the common people who believed in him, loved him, prayed for him and sustained him by ungrudging taxes and loyal votes. No small part of his greatness lay in his power to win and hold together such a following.

When the assassin's bullet laid him low, his life work was only partly done. The war was over, but suspicion and bitter hatred between North and South burned on—it remained to quench those smoldering fires and to bring in an era of good will and mutual regard.

The former governments within the Confederate States were overthrown. It remained to bring out of the ensuing chaos new governments which should be wise, just and beneficent.

Four million black men who had been slaves were now legally and nominally free, but were actually still bound by the triple cord of poverty, ignorance and superstition. It remained to set their feet in the path of knowledge, self-reliance and real freedom.

All these vast undertakings, so essential for the completion of his life work, were taken up and carried through by men and women who shared Lincoln's spirit and followed his great leadership. Among these none were more useful than that group of our fathers and grandfathers, who banding themselves together under the name The American Missionary Association, undertook to make of those ignorant and helpless ex-slaves, intelligent and useful citizens. They did wonderful things in their day for the nation and for its needy people, but like Lincoln they have been called away before their task was completed.

It is now our part to take up and carry on their unfinished work. We have become the members and supporters of The American Missionary Association.

By its help we are teaching and training the children and grandchildren of the slaves, in many schools and colleges, to become intelligent, upright and prosperous citizens and leaders of their race. We are supplying an excellent school for the log cabin boys and girls of today in the mountains of Tennessee—splendid human material.

We are preparing young Indians to meet the problems of civilized life. We are assisting the folks of Porto Rico as they arise to the responsibilities of new citizenship in their beautiful island. We are giving friendly help to our brothers of Mexican blood. We are extending the hand of sympathy and help to the Japanese and Chinese upon the Pacific Coast, and we are caring for the sick by thousands in clinic and hospital.

4. LINCOLN, THE EMANCIPATOR—A Philanthropist's View.

And how glad and grateful we all must be that, under his leadership, the age-long sin and shame of human slavery was forever banished from the land.

Lincoln hated slavery with all his might. He hated it because it was wrong. "If slavery is not wrong," he said, "nothing is wrong." He hated it because of its effect upon the slave; he hated it because of its effect upon the master; he hated it because it was a menace to the peace, the prosperity and the very life of the nation. But he did not hate or blame the slaveholders. He was kindly and fair-minded in his attitude toward them. He recognized the fact that they were not responsible for an institution that had come down to them from the past and which was recognized and upheld by the Constitution.

He did not, therefore, at first, propose to interfere with slavery within those states where it was legally established. It was only when emancipation became possible and necessary, as a war measure, that he seized the opportunity to crush out that cruel thing forever, and to set four million bondsmen free.

3. LINCOLN, THE PRESERVER OF THE UNION—A Patriot's View.

I love to think what a great thing was done for this country and for all the world when, by his help, the American Union was saved. How terrible it would have been if four of its stripes had been torn away from "Old Glory," and a score of its stars of light had been blotted out. What a calamity if the world's first great experiment in free, popular government had gone on the rocks, if, instead of being one great nation, our country had been broken up into a group of little independent states, each jealous of the others, threatening one another by standing armies and interrupting the free and prosperous flow of commerce by dozens of frontiers—with custom houses and tariff restrictions.

